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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a definition for the word democracy and examines some of the many definitions and descriptions of democracy that have been offered over time. The paper offers a lesson plan for teaching about democracy, beginning with an introduction: "Democracy as an Argument or a Developing Dialogue" (Donald Bragaw; Michael Hartoonian). The lesson plan cites approximate length and appropriate grade level; addresses national standards; lists essential purposes and essential resources; details an eight step teaching strategy; suggests application; and addresses assessment. The paper also contains: "Why Has Post-Communist Democratization Been So Difficult?" (Stephen Harrison). Discusses the difficulty in implementing democratic reforms in post-Communist eastern Europe. It provides a lesson plan in the same format as the first lesson plan. Contains a student handout. (BT)

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Donald Bragaw

American Forum for Global Education, New York, NY.

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Democracy and the "New" Democracies

Fragile, Difficult, and Subject to Change

By Donald Bragaw

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Democracy is a form of institutionalization of continual conflicts... [and] of uncertainty, of subjecting all interests to uncertainty... Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections. There are parties: divisions of interest, values and opinions. There is competition, organized by rules. And there are periodic winners and losers.

- Przeworski, Adam, 1986. "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Prospects*

What is democracy? The issue is a contentious one, and many different interpretations have been offered...

- Giddens, Anthony. See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Giddens/RWDlectures.htm> (July 17, 2003) path:1999 BBC Reith Lectures/London Week 5, Democracy

What's in a Definition?

Because it is so important for us to understand what the dimensions of a democratic system are, let us begin by examining some of the many definitions and descriptions that have been offered.

Have your students read through the following definitions, and ask them to examine the definitions carefully to see where the difficulties or contentious issues might arise.

- How might Professors Przeworski and Giddens justify their statements that defining democracy is a contentious issue and that democracy is a system of uncertainties? What evidence of this exists in the following definitions?
- Using the definitions, what are the common elements of a democracy on which a majority of the writers agree?
- Using the definitions, how might one interpret democracy as an "argument" or, at least, as a system that evolves through conflicting viewpoints or positions?

All the definitions that appear on the next page have been adapted from William M. Reisinger's **Selected Definitions of Democracy.** <http://www.uiowa.edu/~creees/reising/resources_for_students/DefinitionsOfDemocracy.html> (July 21, 2003)

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Definitions of Democracy

"A constitution [or *politeia*] may be defined as 'the organization of a city [or *polis*] in respect of its offices generally, but especially in respect of that particular office which is sovereign in all issues. . . . In democratic cities, for example, the people [*demos*] is sovereign. . . . [W]hen the masses govern the city with a view to the common interest, the form of government is called by the generic name . . . of 'constitutional government'. . . . Democracy is directed to the interest of the poor [only, not to the interests of everyone— WR]." (Aristotle. 1995. **Politics**. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 97-101.)

Democracy is "government by the people; that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole, and is exercised either directly by them . . . or by officers elected by them." **(Oxford English Dictionary**, 1933.)

A democratic regime is one " . . . in which *the peaceful rivalry for the exercise of power exists constitutionally.* [italics in original] The phrase 'exercise of power' implies temporary control." (Aron, Raymond, 1969. **Democracy and Totalitarianism**. New York: Praeger.)

"The competitive electoral context, with several political parties organizing the alternatives that face the voters, is the identifying property of the contemporary democratic process . . . . [D]emocratic systems [are] . . . characterized by competitive elections in which most citizens are eligible to participate." (Powell, G. Bingham, 1982. **Contemporary Democracies**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 3.)

"Democracy is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional power holders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people." (Vanhannen, Tatu, 1997. **Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries**. New York: Routledge. p. 31.)

"Democracy provides opportunities for 1) effective participation, 2) equality in voting, 3) gaining enlightened understanding, 4) exercising final control [by the people—WR] over the agenda, and 5) inclusion of adults." The political institutions that are necessary to pursue these goals are "1) elected officials, 2) free, fair and frequent elections, 3) freedom of expression, 4) alternative sources of information, 5) associational autonomy, and 6) inclusive citizenship." (Dahl, Robert A., 1998. **On Democracy**. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. pp. 38 and 85)

Democracy is "governance by leaders whose authority is based on a limited mandate from a universal electorate that selects among genuine alternatives and has some rights to political participation and opposition." (Danziger, James N., 1998. **Understanding the Political World: A Comparative Introduction to Political Science**, 4th ed. New York: Longman. p. 159.)

"[I]n a democracy important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend, directly or indirectly, upon public opinion formally expressed by citizens of the community, the vast bulk of whom have equal political rights." (Weale, Albert, 1999. **Democracy**. New York: St. Martin's Press. p. 14.)

Democracy is "the substitution of election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few." Shaw, George Bernard, quoted in Roper, Jon, 1989. **Democracy and Its Critics: Anglo-American Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century**. Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman. p. 155.)

(continued on page 16)

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Democracy As An Argument or A Developing Dialogue

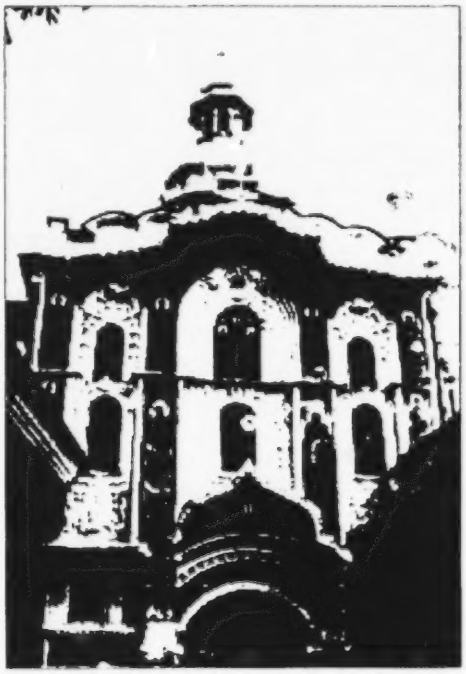
By Donald Bragaw and Michael Hartoonian

INTRODUCTION

Many people assume that democracy is a naturally developing system, and still more assume that it has always existed in the United States as if a given of human existence. But as the excerpt below indicates, the development of democracy in the United States has been a decidedly difficult and sometimes very contentious matter. Read through the following excerpt and see whether you agree with the authors that democracy is an argumentative process, one that requires both time and patience. Those who assumed that the newly emerging nations growing out of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990-91 would turn to democracy would need to reexamine the history of the United States, or England, or France (or any of the democratic nations of today) to understand that the process of democratization in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is at a very early stage, a stage that will require nurturing and encouragement from all sources. Democracy is a difficult system both to institute and to maintain.

Distribute the following excerpt for student consideration. Discuss with the students the notion of a "contentious issue" (e.g., slavery, civil rights, abortion, affirmative action, women's rights, labor's right to organize, gender equality), noting carefully several recent Supreme Court decisions that have attempted to deal with the issue(s), and have the students reason through how democracy in this country may have been fostered or denied in each of the cases.

Throughout the history of democracies in the world, freedom, equality, and well being for all were not always automatic. In the case of the United States, even now the system is still not perfect. Obtaining and maintaining freedom and equality for all remains a never-ceasing goal. Americans have been an argumentative bunch—challenging, discussing, debating and talking about ideas in which an injustice, a denial of rights, or an abridgement of freedom has forced us to examine ourselves and our beliefs as well as our system of government. We assert the claim that such a "civic argument" is one way in which the progress of democracy can be stimulated, measured and evaluated. As we examine the emerging democracies of the world, it is important to keep the US experience as one example of how democracy was established, developed and sustained.



Lavra Monastery, Kiev

Democracy is a civic argument that is more than merely a political or economic process of development. It involves historical memory resulting from both experience and formal learning, and often demands that citizens freely use that information to take sides, or assume positions relative to issues involved in their daily personal/public, political, economic, social and global lives. It is a system of ongoing conversations that demands a civil relationship between citizens. This does not always mean agreement; there may be discontent and turmoil, but it must be civil. Democracy does not automatically arise out of "primal mud" but needs to be planted and nourished by years of practice and experience. It demands conditions that allow people to freely discuss, debate and argue. It means, also, a growing awareness that both sees and values the relationship between the individual, and the public roles required of all active citizens in confronting and

dealing with the issues of the day. It is an awareness of the struggle between self-interest and the knowledge that we are all part of an organized system of political, economic, social and other cultural activities and practices that attain their quality through the development of a "civic" conscience.

Another way of looking at a "civic conscience" is to view it as the intentional linking of ethics (the ways in which people behave) and knowledge and operation of the world around us. This, of course, takes citizen interest and involvement. Such involvement with others is the hallmark of both democracy and education. Not just any involvement, but the involvement that arouses in citizens the search for freedom, where freedom is demonstrated in the ability to reach, and to be allowed to reach, beyond what a person presently is, and to imagine new realities built on the sharing of dynamic, and possibly competing, value claims. Such ideas form the fundamental arguments that keep a democracy dynamic.

Food market in Central Asia.

As European colonists arrived in the "new world" of the Americas they brought with them European law, traditions and beliefs, but soon found that the near virgin-land they settled called for innovation and experimentation—not alone in legal systems or political structures, but in the very act of existing—for not all people were of the same class, or held the same views. Nor were they the only peoples on the land. Forced to cope daily with those challenges, the arguments of democratic life grew quickly, and for the European Empires, dangerously. The American Revolution did not suddenly arise out of the minds of Jefferson or Madison, or others, but had been accomplished long before in the daily living of people constantly faced with the tensions of life adjustment, and accomplishing it within structures they themselves began to develop and nurture. The fertile ground, the freedom of thinking and doing, the unimpeded movement, all conspired to promote increasingly democratic attitudes and behavior. It was, from the beginning, a culture conducive to the promotion of democratic behavior; the geographical isolation of the American colonies and, then, the United States, only intensified that internal development. It was those active and community-oriented forms of democracy that De Tocqueville found so intriguing when he traveled in the United States early in the 19th century, and which he so aptly termed the "habits of the heart." When people talk in a society, when they are allowed to talk and "argue" in a civil conversation, there is a greater respect for and honoring of the idea of self-governance—at all levels.

The world is faced in Eastern Europe and Central Asia with new nations whose borders have seen constant invasion and conquest. One repressive regime after another crushed the will and desire of the people for anything beyond sheer survival. The great need in these areas is for a culture that can provide the potential for democratic behavior. There is no want of desire for freedom and economic independence. The process of democratization will be gradual and will probably take a different form. The value tensions described below will be present in these areas, but they may not always be recognizable to the Western eye. But the process has begun; the people in some of these areas have begun to savor the rule of law in which they participate, the potential for the accumulation of private wealth and well-being within the structures of their own making are emerging; there is a desire for security and an improved quality of life. Changing hundreds, nay, in some cases, thousands of years of traditions of oppression is a task worthy of a global Hercules, but is motivated by the free will of a newly freed populace whose memory must be helped to erase the cumulative grievances of all those years.

Excerpted from: Bragaw, Donald H., and Michael Hartoonian, 2003. "Democracy as a Civic Challenge," in The Democratic Process: Promises and Challenges. *New York: The American Forum for Global Education.*

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A Foundation for Democracy

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union have struggled to implement democratic reforms. In fact, a recent survey developed by Freedom House, in consultation with the U.S. Agency for International Development and published as **Nations in Transit 2002**, shows that the twelve NIS they track have made little or no progress towards democratization since 1998. This trend has created a sense of pessimism and led some to believe that true democratic reform is a distant if not impossible goal for many of these nations. At least part of the problem is explained by a lack of economic, political, social, and psychological conditions necessary for democratic reform. In this lesson students examine the link between these factors and democratic reform efforts in NIS countries.

APPROXIMATE LENGTH

3 class periods

GRADE LEVEL

Middle School

NATIONAL STANDARDS

National Standards for Civics and Government—How has the United States influenced other nations, and how have other nations influenced American politics and society? What is the impact of the concept of democracy and individual rights on the world? Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the impact of American political ideas on the world.

ESSENTIAL PURPOSES

Students will be able to:

- identify some of the political, social, economic, and psychological conditions preventing some Newly Independent States from achieving a successful democratic form of government.
- develop a set of economic, social, psychological and political conditions considered essential for democratization in the Newly Independent States.
- understand the complexity of replacing one set of systems, beliefs and practices with another.

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

50 sheets of 8 ½ x 11 white paper; felt-tip markers; masking tape.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Although most of the NIS countries are trying to implement democratic reforms, many are experiencing varying degrees of success. Lack of success is often due to the fact that democratic reforms are not compatible with existing economic, social, political, or psychological beliefs, practices or circumstances. In many cases successful democratic reform depends on reforming parts of other systems within a country. Students must understand that as a political system, democracy must relate to and interact compatibly with other systems in a country.

The following factors or "building blocks" are provided as examples:

- Economic Factors: Free Market; adequate standard of living; economic opportunity;
- Political Factors: Democratic framework; rule of law; value of political participation; free press; civic awareness; state security;
- Psychological Factors: Self-worth and pride; focus on future; little or no "victim" complex; optimism; openness to change;
- Social Factors: Open education; freedom of religious practice; support for multiculturalism; focus on group versus individual; social discourse; adequate standard of health; government.

1 Begin the lesson by telling students that in many of the NIS during the past decade, democracy has not been realized to the degree hoped. Ask students to hypothesize why many of the countries have struggled to realize democratic reforms. List student responses on the chalkboard.

2 Explain that in order for democracy to generally take root and develop in the NIS, certain economic, social, political and psychological conditions must be in place. Stress that democratic reform cannot develop in isolation from other systems. Further explain that in this lesson students will be asked to develop a set of conditions or "building blocks" on which democratic reform can be built in the NIS. They will analyze relationships between economic, social, political and psychological conditions and democratic reform efforts, and make decisions about essential principles that underlie democratic reform.

3 Ask the students to identify problems that might hinder the progress of democratic reform. On the chalkboard, categorize student responses as economic, social, political, or psychological. Ask students to discuss why each response identified might hinder reform.

4 Divide students into four groups. Assign each group one of the following categories: Economic, Political, Social, and Psychological. Give each group ten or twelve sheets of blank paper and a felt-tip marker.

5 Tell students that their task is to identify specific factors or conditions, within their assigned system categories, considered essential for successful democratic reforms in NIS. They are to write each condition on one of the sheets of paper provided, and these will then be used to form a set of "building blocks" for a foundation of democratic reform in the NIS. Provide an example from each of the four systems.

6 Collect the sheets of paper from each group. Organize them into categories and tape them to a wall or bulletin board as one would use bricks or building blocks to form a foundation for a structure.

7 Ask each of the groups to describe the essential conditions or factors selected. Instruct each group to provide a rationale for the selection and encourage a full class discussion of each.

8 Tell students that although the NIS vary widely in their success with democratic reform efforts, in order to experience success, reforms must be linked to economic, social, political and psychological conditions. Tell them that they have identified several of these conditions and instruct them to add others they may have missed by developing additional "building blocks" for the foundation. Discuss any conditions added.

APPLICATION

Cover or remove the "structure" and ask students to complete the following homework assignment or assessment: "Identify and discuss some of the key reasons democratic reform is not being fully realized in the NIS today and develop a set of economic, social, political and psychological "building blocks" you believe are necessary for success in the democratization process."

ASSESSMENT

Students may be assessed on both their participation in the small group and class discussions and on their writing assignment. Use the following criteria:

- Attentiveness to the information in the activity sheet.
- Thoughtful contributions.
- Active listening.

St. Basil's, Moscow

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Why Has Post-Communist Democratization Been So Difficult?

by Stephen Hanson

DEMOCRACY IS NOT EASY

The first thing one should realize when discussing the problems of democratization in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is that these problems are hardly unusual in the world today. Indeed, from a historical and global perspective, it is countries like the United States and the nations of Western Europe, with their stable and highly legitimate democratic institutions that are the exception. Most of the world is still sadly burdened with corrupt, non-responsive, and often callous forms of government. American students often find it difficult to accept this point. Americans tend to believe that the U.S. political system is a good model for the entire world, and we are surprised when other countries do not successfully adopt our institutions. It is worth emphasizing, then, that until about 150 years ago—out of about 10,000 years of recorded human social history, and about 8 million years of human evolution—no society in the world granted its entire population the right to vote in regular elections for political leadership. The earliest forms of human government involved collective decision making by male elders of the village or tribe. Most organized states throughout history have been empires, monarchies, or dictatorships. Experiments with democracy in small city-states, such as Athens in Ancient Greece, excluded most of the population, including slaves, women, workers, and foreigners.

But if we tend to underestimate how recent full-fledged democracy really is, we also often forget just how many institutions must be established and stabilized before Western-style representative democracy can function well. Strong political parties, like the U.S. Republican and Democratic Parties, are vital in providing voters with well-defined political alternatives and in organizing legislative representatives into coherent political blocs. Establishing a strong and independent judiciary, in which judges cannot easily be bribed or corrupted by powerful interest groups, also takes patience and determination. Even seemingly more basic institutions, such as a network of local polling places that faithfully observe the rules of secret balloting and open access to registered voters, can be very difficult to set up in a newly formed democracy. Yet without strong parties, a dependable judiciary, or trustworthy local electoral officials, "democracy" can quickly turn into a mere façade for political manipulation by wealthy, well-connected elites.

Sadly, this is the situation in many if not most of the new non-Western democracies that have been established in the twentieth century. While elections for top leaders have become very widespread in the world today, few of the other necessary institutions to make liberal democracy function as originally intended are in place. Thus democratic politics in the developing world tends to be highly corrupt, power is dependent upon personal ties with existing elites, semi-authoritarian forms of "presidential" rule are common, and ordinary citizens often feel that their votes have no effect whatsoever on state policies. In some places, mass political alienation has led to a renewed fascination with authoritarian leaders who promise that they will eliminate the "inefficiency" and "gridlock" of democracy—although authoritarian regimes in the developing world are generally even more inefficient and stagnant than their democratic competitors.

From this point of view, the struggles of democratic reformers in the post-Communist world to establish, maintain and consolidate key political institutions are remarkably similar to those of democratic activists elsewhere. From the U.S. or Western European perspective, the record of post-Communist

CHECKING PERCEPTIONS

In this excerpt, the author, an expert on the development of democratic reforms in the new Russia, and in the newly emergent "democratic" states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, provides some explanation for the slow development of democratic systems in these areas. Compare and contrast this account with both the experience of the United States as found in the Bragaw-Hartoonian excerpt, and in the lesson "A Foundation for Democracy."

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Ashqabat, Turkmenistan, Statue of Turkmenbashi

democracy thus far may appear rather dismal; but from a deeper historical perspective, the fact that so many countries in the region remain committed to democratic forms of rule as the twenty-first century begins is a remarkable achievement. Still, there is no denying that the problems with democracy discussed above could erode this achievement in the years to come. We must therefore turn our attention to the key factors thought by scholars to explain why so few post-Communist countries have built fully consolidated democracies thus far.

IS "CULTURE" THE PROBLEM?

One common explanation for the problems of countries like Russia, Ukraine, and the Central Asian States in developing democratic institutions refers to the supposed "authoritarian political cultures" of their populations. It is often pointed out, for example, that Russia, along with most of the other former Soviet republics, has never had any historical experience with democracy, being ruled for several centuries by tsars, and then for most of the twentieth century by a Communist Party dictatorship. As a result, the argument continues, few Russians (or Ukrainians, or Georgians, or Uzbeks) are in the habit of organizing interest groups or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to fight for their rights, and many may prefer rule by a "strong leader" to the continual compromises and half-measures typical of representative democracy. The popularity of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who with his background in the former Soviet KGB (secret police) and his black belt in judo projects an image of toughness and decisiveness, seems at first glance to confirm this theory. Adherents of this viewpoint also argue that the more "modern" and "Western" political cultures of the countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, due to their more limited exposure to Communism and their greater cultural proximity to Western Europe, make democracy work more effectively there than in the rest of the former Soviet Union.

But there are many reasons to doubt that the experience of Soviet rule has somehow rendered the post-Soviet population unfit for democratic rule. First of all, as was emphasized in the previous section, inclusive democracy is new everywhere. So England, France, and Germany could also have been said to have "authoritarian political cultures" prior to the modern era—indeed, as recently as World War II the latter two countries were ruled by fascist dictatorships. Yet today all of these countries are vibrant democracies. Evidently, political cultures can change—and do so rather quickly. Second, most public opinion polls taken in Russia, Ukraine, and elsewhere in the former USSR show that a majority still supports democratic elections, freedom of speech and assembly, and representative government, even after the disappointing performance of post-Soviet democracy thus far. True, such polls also show that many post-Soviet citizens would trade "democracy" in the abstract for greater "order," but the majority would prefer to have both democracy and order than to have to choose between these values. Third, at least some aspects of political culture in the former

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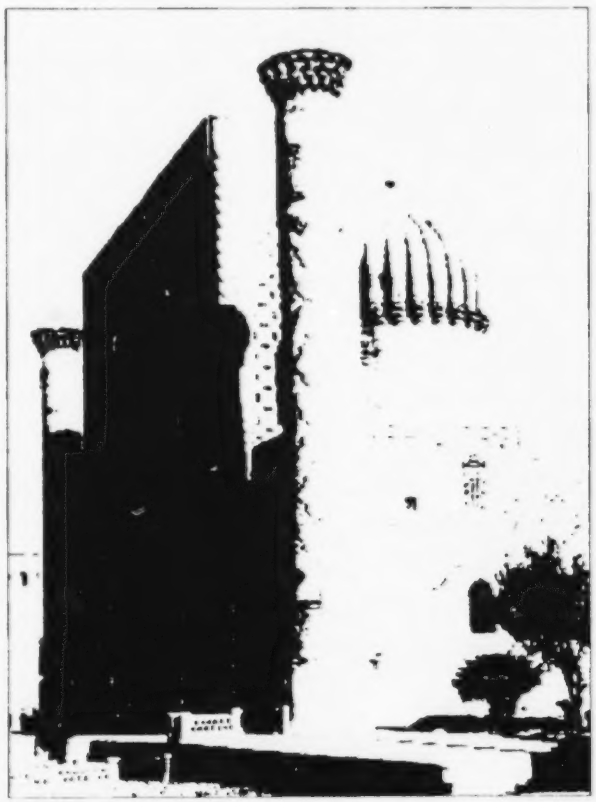
Communist system seem to be actually helpful for building post-Communist democratic institutions. In particular, countries such as Russia have very well developed institutions for mass voting that were set up in Soviet times. Of course, under Communism, voting for official Communist Party candidates was obligatory, but in the last few years of the Soviet Union's existence, reforms introduced by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced genuine electoral competition. Thus, Russians today have nearly 15 years' experience with open democratic politics, and turnout on voting day, while declining, still usually exceeds 60 percent of the population—a far higher proportion than in the United States. Finally, although it's certainly true that post-Communist "civil society"—that is, the network of voluntary public organizations that fight for such things as environmental causes, women's rights, citizen control over the military, and so on—is generally rather weak, there are nonetheless tens of thousands of dedicated democratic activists working under very difficult conditions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics today. Surely these people, too, are part of their countries' "political culture"!

LEGACIES OF THE COMMUNIST PAST

If an unsupportive political culture is not the main explanation for the problems of post- Communist democracies to date, perhaps we should turn our attention simply to the institutional obstacles to full democracy inherited from the Communist past. This line of reasoning has become increasingly influential among scholars in recent years, as the extent of the political and economic damage done by 74 years of Communist rule in the USSR, and 44 years of Communist rule in Eastern Europe, becomes clear.

OBSTACLES TO WOULD-BE DEMOCRATIZERS

Not surprisingly, decades of subordination to a dictatorial regime of this nature have left in its wake many serious obstacles to would-be democratizers. For one thing, it has turned out to be exceedingly hard to build alternative, pro-democratic political parties now that the official dictatorship of the Communist party has ended. In almost every post-Communist country, the ex-Communists have regrouped to become one of the strongest political forces in the country. While in the most advanced Eastern European regimes, such as Poland, the ex-Communists pledge support for Western-style democracy and capitalism, Communists in other places, notably in Russia, remain vocal admirers of Stalin and the Soviet system. Meanwhile, it's very difficult to get young Russians to join any sort of alternative "party"; the very word conjures up the discredited past regime. The secret police have also made comebacks in many post-Communist nations. In Russia, most famously, even the President began his career in the KGB, as he quite proudly likes to remind audiences. As a result, local officials of the Russian Federal Security Service, or FSB (as the former Russian KGB is now called), often feel free to harass, jail, or imprison local environmental campaigners, opposition journalists, and anti-military activists. Obviously, this weakens the vibrancy of grass-roots democracy in the country. Finally, the other crucial institutions for making democracy



Registan Square, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

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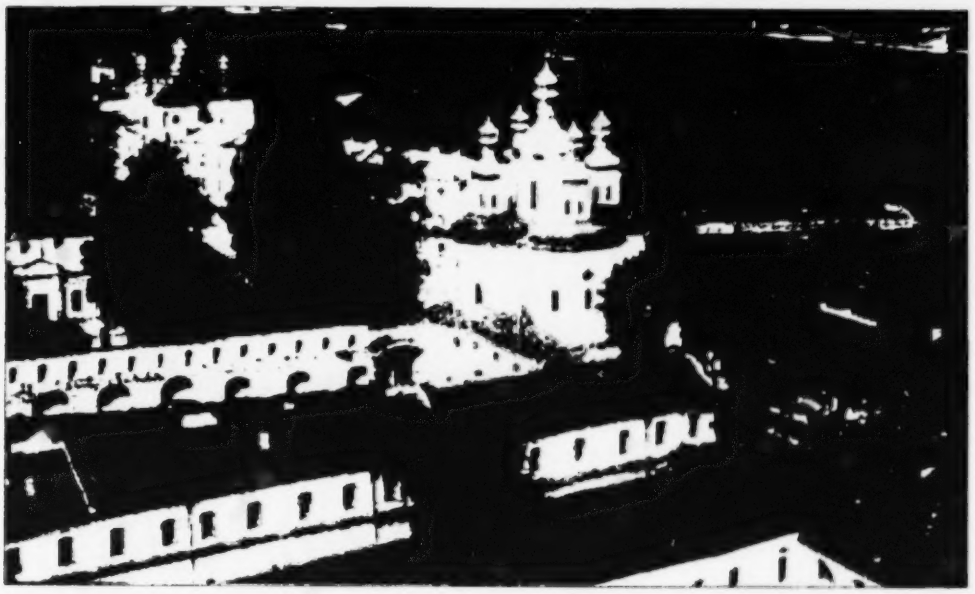

Lavra Monastery, Kiev

work—independent and reliable courts of law, uncorrupted police forces, and reliable state bureaucracies—are all very weak as a result of the effects of Soviet rule; today few post-Soviet citizens trust judges, police officers, or state officials to act in the best interests of the Russian population instead of in their own self-interest.

If the political legacy of one-party rule presents severe problems for building the sorts of institutions that are vital to the functioning of modern representative democracy, the economic legacy of Stalinist industrial and agricultural planning economy is, if anything, even more daunting. All over the former Soviet bloc, huge factories that were designed in the 1930s to be "heroic" examples of socialism are now outdated relics that cannot compete in the global economy. Most, by now, have either shut down or drastically curtailed their production, and thus hundreds of thousands of former blue-collar workers have lost their old state jobs. Still, industrial dinosaurs producing such products as steel, tractors, and weaponry remain economically important to several large Russian cities, and they continue to be subsidized by cheap oil, gas, and electricity in order to keep unemployment rates at a politically sustainable level. As a result, it remains difficult for new start-up businesses that lack comparable political connections to compete. Agriculture, too, suffers from the aftereffects of collectivization under Stalin, in which the peasantry was herded onto "state farms" and "collective farms" that might as well have been concentration camps. After decades of subordination to this system, the rural population today is largely elderly, lacking in skills, and desperate for protection against market forces. Finally, the pervasive corruption of state institutions after the decline and fall of Communism has given rise to a devastating combination of "mafias" and corrupt officials who prey on just about every successful business in the former Soviet Union, as well as in much of Eastern Europe, demanding bribes and protection money while threatening violence against those who dare defy them. Not surprisingly, the small business sector in much of Eurasia today remains comparatively weak; many post-Soviet states today rely economically on the proceeds from energy and mineral exports.

For those who care about democracy, such an economic situation poses several major problems. For one thing, it's very difficult to sustain real democratic opposition when most economic resources are concentrated in a small number of oil and gas firms run by a handful of billionaires and their allies in local industries and state bureaucracies. Those politicians who try to level the playing field to allow for a more competitive form of capitalism quickly discover that they are shut out of the local media, cut off from state sources of funding, and sometimes physically threatened. Meanwhile, those political figures who do the bidding of locally powerful economic "oligarchs" are given free air time, ample campaign resources, and access to the services of professional PR firms to improve their public image. Of course, big money can play a damaging role in all democracies, but the sheer concentration of wealth in most post-Communist countries, combined with the weakness of legal institutions designed to protect opposition forces, makes the situation much worse.

Another obvious problem is that Stalinist economies simply don't do very well when they are forced to compete in the contemporary high-tech globalized marketplace. Every post-Communist country suffered through severe recession, high inflation, and growing unemployment for the first few years after the collapse of state planning, and while in places like Poland, Hungary, and Estonia growth returned after a few years, most of the former Soviet republics continued to experience severe declines in GDP every year until the end of the 1990s. While most of the post-Soviet countries have since turned the corner and begun steady economic growth, the fact remains that "democracy" in these countries is still associated with severe economic dislocation and hardship. Indeed, it's remarkable that more countries did not turn away from democracy entirely in the 1990s, given the depth of the economic crisis their populations faced.

LOOKING AHEAD

Still, neither the political nor the economic legacy of Communism precludes further democratization in the region. As the twenty-first century gets underway, many of the necessary adjustments away from Communist Party dictatorship and Stalinist economic planning have already been made. The generation of young adults now coming of political age in post-Communist Europe and Eurasia were only small children when Communism collapsed, and they do not share the nostalgia for the Soviet system typical of many people of the older generation. Even on the economic level, the continuing problems posed by the Stalinist legacy do not entirely negate the prospects of democracy. As countries like India teach us, democracy can endure for decades even in the face of poverty even worse than that typical of the post-Communist region. Indeed, one of the few positive features of Stalinist development is that East Europeans and Eurasians today are generally well-educated and urbanized, factors that tend to increase support for democratic rule. If the scope for small businesses in the region continues to widen—as it has in some major cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg—one can imagine a "middle class" developing that could serve as the social base for further democratic reforms. Perhaps such factors explain why, despite the crushing burdens of Communist politics and Stalinist economics, the majority of post-Communist countries today are still at least formally democratic.

IDEAS AND DEMOCRACY

This brings us to the final factor that seems important in explaining the course of post-Communist democratization thus far: the role of ideas. Given the seeming absence of a historical "political culture" of democracy in much of the region, and given the twin institutional legacies of Leninist dictatorship and Stalinist misdevelopment, one might actually expect all of the region to be ruled autocratically. Instead, throughout the region, and even under the most depressing dictatorships of Central Asia, we continue to witness democratic activists struggling for human rights, freedom of speech and assembly, and open political participation. Perhaps the single most important reason for this result is a factor that many political scientists tend to ignore or underestimate: simply put, democracy is still an inspiring ideal to large numbers of people in the post-Communist milieu.

In the first years after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, a key ideological slogan of democratic activists through the region was the desire for a "return to Europe." In Eastern Europe, in particular, the argument was made that the destiny of these countries was to "rejoin" the

Moscow

Western democracies of the European Union, and to "restore" their longstanding civic institutions. In fact, few of the Eastern European countries actually had much history of democracy prior to Soviet rule, but the myth of a unified and democratic Europe proved to be inspiring enough to motivate countless people to build new political parties, to defend the rule of law, and to fight for the rights of citizens in order to overcome the divisions created by the Cold War. Even in places like Ukraine and Russia, seemingly too distant from Western Europe to be affected by such rhetoric, the ideal of "returning to Europe"—and thus to European-style democratic capitalism—has been an important goal of almost every post-Communist political administration.

From this point of view, it's perhaps not so surprising that democracy has fared best where the claim of a "return to Europe" has been most plausible—that is, in the countries immediately bordering Western Europe. Democracy has been sustained as well—although with the various institutional problems discussed above—in the next "tier" of post-Communist nations further east, including Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and Russia. Where it has been utterly impossible to imagine a "return to Europe"—as in the case of the five Central Asian states—dictatorship has been thus far the universal outcome.

However, a focus on the role of ideas in history allows us to conclude this brief survey of post-Communist democratization on a positive note. If the emphasis here on ideals and ideologies is correct, then democracy remains a real institutional possibility even in the most seemingly inauspicious geographic, institutional, and cultural environments. Remembering just how recent our own inclusive democracies really are, we may begin to have more patience as we watch—and try to support—the unfolding democratic struggles in much of Eastern Europe and Eurasia today. The outcome of these struggles is still very uncertain, and the possibility remains that we will see a whole series of new dictatorships established in the post-Communist world as the twenty-first century unfolds. If so, the world is in for some dark and turbulent times. Yet if ideas play a key role in history, then the early dream of a unified democratic North—and perhaps, eventually, a democratic globe—may also turn out in the end to be a practical reality.

Excerpted from: Hanson, Stephen, 2003. "Why Has Post-communist Democratization Been So Difficult?" in The Democratic Process: Promises and Challenges. *NY: The American Forum for Global Education.*

Independence Square, Kiev

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Democratic Culture: Principles and Problems

Use this lesson to both check perceptions of how democracy seems to be progressing in the areas of the former Soviet Union, as well as to summarize the basic principles and tenets of a democratic system of government, and how such a system might need time to develop as it did in the United States. The teacher might also have students speculate on how the United States, using its own experience as a model, might best help these new nations to achieve the freedom, equality and justice that appear to be a hallmark of a democratic society.

INTRODUCTION

Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, many nations that make up the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union have actively sought to reform Soviet authoritarian government with various forms of democracy. Although it is now more than ten years since independence was gained by these states, most continue to struggle with implementing democratic government processes. At least part of the reason for the struggle can be attributed to the challenge of developing a democratic culture. In this lesson, students explore some of the principles of a democratic culture and examine the problems and issues of instituting these principles in the Newly Independent States.

APPROXIMATE LENGTH

2 class periods

GRADE LEVEL

Secondary

NATIONAL STANDARDS

National Standards for Civics and Government—How has the United States influenced other nations, and how have other nations influenced American politics and society? What is the impact of the concept of democracy and individual rights on the world? Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the impact of American political ideas on the world.

ESSENTIAL PURPOSES

Students will be able to:

- define the term "democracy."
- describe many of the key ideas that define democracy.
- identify the principles of a democratic culture.
- analyze some of the problems Newly Independent States face in achieving democracy because of their lack of a democratic culture.

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

Student Handout A
"Bozijistan Information Bulletin."

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1 There are many definitions and types of democracy. Generally democratic government is defined as a form of government different from other forms of government such as a monarchy or dictatorship. Ask students to describe the type of democracy found in the United States today. Ask how this form of democracy is different from other forms of democracy. Explain that in this lesson, students will be asked to examine what it means to possess a democratic culture. Tell them that one of the reasons democracy is not flourishing in many NIS countries is the lack of an evolving democratic culture. Also tell them that they will be asked to analyze why cultures of democracy are not being realized and how the lack of democratic cultures might slow the process of democratization in the NIS.

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Ask students to identify what they consider the key elements or components of a democracy. List these elements on the chalkboard.

Ask students to discuss to what degree democracy in the US is based on these principles.

2 Ask students to define the term "democratic culture." List the various descriptions on the chalkboard and discuss.

Concept: A democracy places final decision-making in the hands of the people. Government exists only by the consent of the citizens.

Concept: Types of democracy include direct democracy and representative or indirect democracy. Two forms of representative democracy are presidential democracy and parliamentary democracy. The US is a presidential, representative democracy.

Concept: A democracy is both formal and procedural. Formal democracy consists of a set of rules, procedures, and institutions. Substantive democracy consists of an ongoing process in which individuals have the ability to participate in decisions.

Concept: Principles of democracy might include the following: inclusive citizenship; rule of law; separation of powers; elected power-holders; freedom of expression and alternative sources of information; associational autonomy or civilian control over security forces

3 Ask students to describe the degree to which they think the US possesses a democratic culture. Ask them to provide examples.

Distribute Handout A "Bozijistann Information Bulletin" to each student. Ask students to read the information and to assess the degree to which Bozijistan possesses a democratic culture.

4 Divide students into small groups of 4 or 5. Instruct students to discuss why Bozijisitan does or does not possess a democratic culture. Lead a whole-classroom discussion on the degree to which Bozijisitan does or does not possess a democratic culture.

5 Back in small groups, ask students to identify and list the formal and procedural rules and processes needed in order for Bozijisitan to move forward in the development of a democratic culture. Ask small groups to share their ideas in large groups and list the ideas on the chalkboard.

6 Assign students to write a one-page paper titled "Democratic Culture 101" in which they explain the principles of democratic culture and how the lack of a democratic culture is holding many NIS back from realizing a functional democratic government.

Note: The information sheet portrays a country that is moving towards democracy but lacks many of the necessary ingredients for a truly functional democracy, including a strong sense of democratic culture.

ASSESSMENT

Students may be assessed on both their participation in the small group and class discussions and on their writing assignment. Use the following criteria:

- Attentiveness to the information in the activity sheet.
- Thoughtful contributions.
- Active listening.

The written assignment should reflect accurately factual information, contain well-reasoned arguments, and use appropriate language and writing style.

About the Author of this Paper

Don Bragaw is an educational consultant and professor emeritus at East Carolina University. He is former President of the National Council for the Social Studies.

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STUDENT HANDOUT

BOZIJISTAN INFORMATION BULLETIN

Despite over a decade of independence and an ongoing transition to democracy and a free market, Bozijistan has yet to achieve full development of either. Widespread poverty has taken an enormous toll on the process of democratization because it has led to widespread political apathy and has led to a decline in civic consciousness. Many people feel that political participation and civic action cannot help resolve their problems.

Democratization is not seen as a way to prosperity. The political system combines elements of democracy and autocratic rule. Basic civil liberties are in place and the press is relatively free. However, the right of citizens to change their government has been severely and at times brutally restricted. Most elections held since 1986 have fallen short of international standards.

The constitution of Bozijistan allows for the election of a president and a parliament. The parliament of 140 seats appoints a prime minister who in turn nominates cabinet members, who must then be approved by the president. In ten years, nine different prime ministers have held office. The parliament can unseat the entire government with a vote of no confidence, while the president possesses the power to dissolve parliament. Currently there are nearly 100 registered political parties but only ten or so are strong enough to exercise any influence.

In 1997 eight members of parliament were murdered at the parliament building. Although some pointed to the president and claimed the act was a means of getting rid of political opposition, no formal charges have been made.

According to the Ministry of Justice, more than 2000 registered non-governmental organizations existed in Bozijistan in 2001. Nevertheless, only a few operate in practice. Their scope of activity includes politics, human rights, labor and business. Most depend on money provided by NGOs from western countries. Most Bozijistan citizens are too poor to participate in Bozijistan NGO activities.

Article 65 of the Bozijistan Constitution guarantees to all "the right to freedom of speech, and the right to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas by any means of information communication." Freedom of speech can be restricted "by law, if necessary, for the protection of state and public order, health and morality, and the rights, freedoms, honor and reputation of others."

Problems with the rule of law are among the most acute in Bozijistan. The most frequent issue, corruption, remains high. Government connections are important to many types of economic activity and the government does not enforce fair business competition properly. Payoffs to government officials at all levels are a common practice. Also, despite legal provisions, the police frequently abuse suspects and prisoners. There have been cases in which prisoners have died because of mistreatment while in custody.

The impartiality and fairness of Bozijistan judges varies dramatically, depending on the nature of the case they are trying. The public does not perceive the courts as independent and free of corruption, and sensitive political cases against the government are almost never resolved. This reflects the fact that the constitution fails to provide for an independent judiciary and that the majority of judges are appointed by the president for life.

The difficult socioeconomic conditions in Bozijistan have given rise to populism and demagogy. With liberal values largely discredited, voters tend to support political groups that promise quick fixes through active state interference in economic affairs. The absence of a strong middle class is a serious problem to the development of democracy. Social polarization and widespread disaffection with the country's leadership feed uncertainty about long-term stability. The mechanism for elections is too flawed to provide a legitimate framework for popular participation in governance. As a result, Bozijistan is vulnerable to future upheavals.

Definitions of Democracy (continued from page 2)

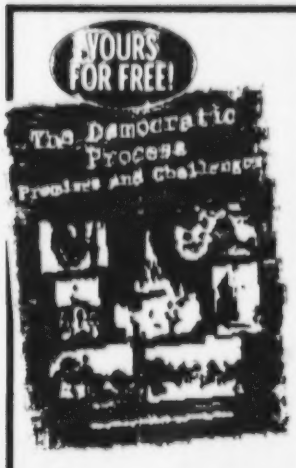
"Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process." (Schattschneider, E.E., 1960. **The Semisovereign People**. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. p. 140.)

A definition of the ideal: "Government by the people, where liberty, equality and fraternity are secured to the greatest possible degree and in which human capacities are developed to the utmost, by means including free and full discussion of common problems and interests." (Pennock, J. Roland, 1979. **Democratic Political Theory**. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p.41.)

And of the *practice*: "Rule by the people where 'the people' includes all adult citizens not excluded by some generally agreed upon and reasonable disqualifying factor . . . . 'Rule' means that public policies are determined either directly by vote of the electorate or indirectly by officials freely elected at reasonably frequent intervals and by a process in which each voter who chooses to vote counts equally . . . and in which a plurality is determinative." (Pennock, J. Roland, 1979. **Democratic Political Theory**. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 9.)

A 'democratic regime' is "first and foremost a set of procedural rules for arriving at collective decisions in a way which accommodates and facilitates the fullest possible participation of interested parties." (Bobbio, Norberto, 1987. **The Future of Democracy: A Defense of the Rules of the Game**. New York: Polity. p. 19.)

"Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives." (Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl, 1991. "What Democracy Is . . . And Is Not," **Journal of Democracy** 2 #3 (Summer), p. 76.)



THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: PROMISES AND CHALLENGES

When the Berlin Wall came crashing down it symbolically foretold the end of the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. While the newly independent states profess democratic beliefs, the newly emerged democracies have encountered endless difficulties trying to create the atmosphere and the culture of democratic practice. Students must discover that not all people live under the democratic banner, and that there are many forms of democracy that require time and patience to mature. The Democratic Process: Promises and Challenges is a resource for teachers to help students understand the democratization process occurring in the former Soviet Union, as well as other countries around the world. Geared toward the middle and secondary levels. Linda Arkin and Donald Bragaw, eds. 2003. 245pp. Softcover.

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